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## At the launch of the Maltese Presidency of the EU, Minister Carmelo Abela expressed his wish for a compromise on the common asylum policy

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During a visit in Austria with the Austrian Minister for Home Affairs Wolfgang Sobotka and the Austrian European Commissioner responsible for Europe's Neighbourhood Policy Johannes Hahn, the Minister for Home Affairs and National Security, Carmelo Abela, expressed the wish that an agreement on the common asylum policy is reached during the next six months of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

During this visit, migration and the impact of the Neighbourhood Policy on migration were discussed.

Minister Abela remarked how this time around, the first of January didn't only mark the beginning of a new year for Malta, but also the beginning of the Maltese Presidency of the European Union.

The Minister sustained that as the current president, Malta believes that in light of the current migrant situation, a compromise has to be reached by the EU Member States in order to pave the way forward.

Minister Abela said that Malta will do its utmost to reach said compromise, but he expressed how this also depends on the Member States themselves, since they are the ones that will have to accept the proposed agreement. Another important factor in this agreement is how the European Union can improve its efficiency in the return of migrants that do not qualify for asylum, especially given the fact that the vast majority of them do not possess any documentation.

Another point discussed during the visit was the need for an agreement and arrangements with third countries in order to tackle migration in a better way.

Minister Abela stated that the fact that Malta will be the only Mediterranean country to hold the Presidency for a number of years highlights the urgency of this agreement.

Minister Sobotka and Commissioner Hahn wished Minister Abela and the Maltese Government success in the six months of the Presidency with the hope that positive results are achieved.

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The Minister for Home Affairs and National Security, Carmelo Abela and his Madam were invited by the Minister for Interior Affairs Wolfgang Sobotka to a New Year's Concert in Vienna and to an informal dinner together with the Austrian Commissioner Johannes Hahn.

